

July 16, 2020

Dear Chair Michlewitz and Chair Cronin,

My name is Karen Merrill and I live at 9 Stowe Lane Plymouth, MA 02360. I work at Plymouth North High School and am a science teacher. As a constituent, I write to express my opposition to Senate Bill 2800. This legislation is detrimental to police and correction officers who work every day to keep the people of the Commonwealth safe. In 2019 the Criminal Justice System went through reform. That reform took several years to develop. I am dismayed at the hastiness that this bill passed but I welcome the opportunity to tell you how this bill turns its back on the very men and women who serve the public.

Qualified Immunity: Qualified Immunity doesn't protect officers who break the law or violate someone's civil rights. Qualified Immunity protects officers who did not clearly violate statutory policy or constitutional rights. The erasure of this would open up the floodgates for frivolous lawsuits causing officers to acquire additional Insurance and tying up the justice system causing the Commonwealth millions of dollars to process such frivolous lawsuits.

Less than Lethal Tools: The fact that you want to take away an officer's use of pepper spray, impact weapons and K9 would leave no other option than to go from, yelling "Stop" to hands on tactics and/or using your firearm. Officers are all for de-escalation but if you take away these tools, the amount of injuries and deaths would without a doubt rise.

Civilian Oversight: While officers are held to a higher standard than others in the community, to have an oversight committee made of people who have never worn the uniform, including an ex convicted felon is completely unnecessary and irresponsible. When this oversight board hears testimony where are the officer's rights under the collective bargaining agreement? Where are the rights to due process? What is the appeal process? These are things that have never been heard or explained to officers. The need for responsible and qualified individuals on any committee should be first and foremost.

I am asking you to stop and think about the rush to reform police and corrections in such haste. Our officers are some of the best and well-trained officers anywhere. Although officers are not opposed to getting better it should be done with dignity and

respect for the men and women who serve the Commonwealth. I ask that you think about the police officer you need to keep your streets safe from violence, and don't dismantle proven community policing practices. I would also ask you to think about the Correction Officer alone in a cell block, surrounded by up to one hundred Inmates, not knowing when violence could erupt. I'm asking for your support and ensuring that whatever reform is passed that you do it responsibly. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Karen Merrill